LIFE MAKES ITS WAY

A personal archive from the threshold

by Yannick Marie

Son of Jean Pierre Marie

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Introduction — Before You Begin

The book you are holding was written by a living person who knew he was dying.

Not as a metaphor. Not as a creative exercise. As a fact — confirmed by doctors, confirmed by a body that had begun its final chapter — and a choice about what to do with that time.

He chose this.

Not because he was a writer. Not because he was famous or powerful or had the kind of life the world usually decides is worth documenting. But because he understood something — something that came to him through meditation, through watching ants and stars and sunlight through trees, through a smell that arrived three times in his life and finally explained itself — and he could not leave without passing it forward.

This is not a book about dying.

It is a book about understanding.

Yannick Marie was born in 1984, son of Jean Pierre Marie, grandson of warriors, father of sons he is proud of beyond any words he has. He is a man who believed in both science and spirituality without letting either one bully the other into silence. A man who meditated alone in a quiet room and arrived at conclusions that no laboratory and no temple had quite managed to reach — not because he was smarter than scientists or holier than priests, but because he was actually there, at the threshold, with his eyes open and his fear gone and nothing left to protect except the truth.

He asked five people around him if they could smell anything unusual.

Nobody could.

The signal was for him alone.

This book is what he did with it.

He wrote it not for glory, not for sympathy, not even entirely for himself. He wrote it as a lamp on a path. So that when your turn comes — and it will come, for every one of us without exception — you might recognize something in these pages and think — oh. That is what he was talking about.

And you will not be alone in that moment.

Someone walked it before you and left you these words.

His name was Yannick Marie.

He went in peace.

Heads up.

With a smile.

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"Death is just a word. What face it wears is made entirely of what you made of your life."

— Yannick Marie, 2026

Chapter One — The Smell

There is a smell that comes before death.

Not the smell of hospitals or medication. Not the smell of illness or grief. Something older than all of that. Something that exists beneath words, beneath thought, in the same quiet place where the body keeps its oldest knowledge.

I have smelled it three times in my life.

The first time was before my mother died. The second time before my father. I didn't understand it then. I told myself it was the cancer, the treatments, the rooms they lived in. I filed it away somewhere I didn't have to look at it.

The third time was two days ago. And this time I knew immediately.

Not with fear. Not with sadness. With recognition.

Like a sound you haven't heard in years that takes you back in one instant to exactly where you were when you first heard it. My body said — I know this. And then, quieter, underneath — this time it's for you.

I asked five people around me if they could smell anything. My sister, my son, others close to me. Nobody smelled a thing. I searched the house. There was nothing to find.

The smell was not in the room. It was in me. Or perhaps more precisely — it was for me. A private signal. A message with my name on it.

If I had to describe it I would say this — imagine the smell of a newborn baby. That warm, specific, unrepeatable smell of new life. Now imagine that same smell on its expiring date. Not rotten in a violent way. Just... no longer valid. Life completing its cycle. The same substance at the other end of its journey.

Birth and death in one breath.

And here is what I came to understand about this smell, sitting with it and thinking about what emotions really are, about pheromones, about the chemical language the body speaks beneath words:

We know that emotions have smells. Science has confirmed it. Fear produces chemicals others detect without knowing it. A mother recognizes her newborn by smell alone. Love, stress, desire — all of them leave a chemical signature in the air around us.

So I ask you this:

If there is a smell to sense love, maybe that is the smell to sense death.

Not external. Not coming from a room or a body visibly failing. A signal. Internal. Personal. The same chemical truth at a different point on the arc.

You don't always recognize love the first time either. Sometimes you only understand what it was after it has passed.

Both arrive quietly. Both are bigger than words. Both change everything.

Chapter Two — The Room Where You Meet Yourself

I meditate alone.

Not because I am antisocial or secretive. But because emotions are personal. They need quiet to surface. They need a room with no audience to show themselves fully. So I close the door, and I sit, and I wait for whatever comes.

When you are close to the end, meditation changes. It becomes less about emptying the mind and more about a kind of honest accounting. Not judgement. Just looking clearly at what was.

The good memories come first usually. And here is what nobody tells you about them — they bring joy and pain at the same time, inseparably, like two hands of the same person. You remember a moment of pure happiness — a laugh, a summer, a face lit up with love — and you feel the warmth of it and the loss of it simultaneously. Because you know. You know that warmth will soon be on the other side of a door you cannot reopen.

But I learned to meet that feeling with one simple sentence.

I was happy because they were happy. That is enough.

Say that to yourself about the people you love. About the moments that made your life feel like it meant something. I was happy because they were happy. Let that be sufficient. Let it close cleanly instead of leaving a wound.

The difficult memories come too. Uninvited, the way they always have been. Mistakes. Words said in anger that cannot be unsaid. Roads not taken. People failed. Moments where you were less than you wished you had been.

I did not fight them.

I let them show me what they came to show me. And then I did something I should have done much earlier in my life.

I repented. Quietly, honestly, without theatre.

I forgave the people who had hurt me. Not for their sake at this point — for mine. Carrying anger toward a dying fire is a strange way to spend your remaining warmth.

And then — the hardest one.

I forgave myself.

This is the one most people leave undone. We are generous with others eventually. We are cruel to ourselves until the very end. But think about it clearly — you are going somewhere, and you cannot bring anything with you. Not your money, not your regrets, not your grievances, not your shame. You arrive as you came. Empty handed.

So be wise about what you carry to the door.

Grief and anger caused you enough trouble while you were alive.

Die in peace. You have earned it. We all have.

Chapter Three — Warriors

We have been warriors in my family for generations.

Not all of us. But certain ones carry it in the blood like a frequency — a refusal to kneel, an instinct to stand, a readiness to pay whatever the fight costs. My grandfather had it. My father had it, in his own way, a gangster with a big heart, which is its own kind of warrior. And I had it. Almost my whole life I was fighting something.

I used to think that was simply who we were.

Now, close to the end, I understand it differently. The warrior was never the destination. It was the vehicle. It was what we needed to survive the specific roads we were given. But the road my son walks is different. And I want to leave him something more complete than what I received.

My father gave me two pieces of wisdom that I have carried like weapons of a different kind.

The first — when you have power, don't make it a weapon. Fear is temporary. No one fears anyone forever. But respect — real respect, earned through how you treat people, how you keep your word, how you carry yourself — respect doesn't fade. Long after the fear is gone, respect remains. Build that instead.

The second he gave me from his deathbed, with whatever breath he had left.

Don't forget to live. It will end some day.

I am on my own deathbed now, in my own way. And I find I have one thing to add to what he gave me.

You don't have to choose between the warrior and the lover. Between strength and happiness. Between protecting what you love and enjoying what you have. My generation was taught it was black or white. You fight or you surrender. You are hard or you are weak.

But grey exists. Grey mixes with every situation. Grey is not weakness — grey is wisdom.

Fight when it is truly worth fighting. Protect yourself and the people you love. Keep that warrior blood alive because the world will always need people who do not kneel when it matters. But do not live in permanent battle. Do not mistake the readiness to fight for the obligation to fight always.

Be better than us. Not by abandoning what we gave you. By completing it.

We gave you the spine. Now build the life around it.

We didn't always get the chance to be happy. We were too busy surviving, protecting, standing our ground. I want more for you. I want you to know that happiness is not a reward that comes after the war. It is the whole point. It was always the whole point.

The war was just to protect the happiness.

Don't forget to live.

It will end some day.

Chapter Four — The Battery

I didn't used to think about what comes after.

For most of my life my honest answer was simple — lights off. It's over. You live, you die, the story ends. I respected people who believed in heaven or reincarnation or the soul floating free, but I didn't share it. And I respected science and its account of decomposition, of the body returning to its chemical components. That seemed true enough.

But something changed when death stopped being an abstract concept and became an appointment with my name on it.

I started sitting outside.

Not to do anything. Just to look. At the sky. At stars. At ants moving in their quiet purposeful lines. At sunlight coming through leaves. At trees that were here before me and will be here after. I sat and I looked and I let what I saw tell me what it knew.

And here is what I came to believe. Not what I was taught. Not what any book told me. What I actually feel to be true from the inside of this experience.

Both science and spirituality are wrong.

And both are right.

Because the real answer is what happens when you mix them honestly together.

My physical body is made of chemicals. That is undeniable. I can feel it failing, system by system, the machinery winding down. Science is correct about that. But I also cannot deny that something runs this body. A consciousness. An awareness. Call it a soul, call it energy, call it what you want — something is home inside here. Something is reading these words through your eyes right now. Something was reading them through mine when I wrote them.

So here is my theory. My personal vision, arrived at in the quiet outside under the sky.

Think of a car and a battery.

When the car breaks down — when the body fails beyond repair — the battery is still charged. The energy is still good. It doesn't disappear. It doesn't go to heaven or dissolve into nothing. It transfers. It moves to the next thing that needs running. Something that was not moving begins to move. Something that was waiting begins to live.

You don't need to be conscious of the transfer. The battery doesn't need to know which car it powers next. The grass doesn't remember being the deer. But it grows because of what the deer gave back to the earth. The cycle doesn't require your awareness to continue. It only requires your participation.

And you don't get to refuse participation. None of us do. That is not a tragedy. That is the most generous possible design.

Think of what this means.

Nothing you are is wasted. Not one particle of your body. Not one volt of whatever animates it. Everything continues. Everything transfers. Everything feeds the next version of the cycle. The deer becomes grass becomes deer again in ways neither the deer nor the grass will ever understand or need to.

When people say they feel the presence of someone they've lost — I used to not know what to make of that. Now I think I do. It may not be a ghost. It may not be a miracle. It may simply be life recognizing the energy that was always part of it, now returned and running through something new. The presence is real. It's just not where we thought to look for it.

I will die and I will become part of what comes next.

I don't know what that is. I don't need to know.

I sat outside and looked at the stars and the ants and the light through the trees and I felt — not thought, felt — that I am not ending. I am transferring.

The car is breaking down.

The battery is fine.

Chapter Five — It's Hard Not To Live Anymore

There will come a moment when everything you thought was difficult reveals itself as gold.

The arguments. The struggles. The bills and the heartbreaks and the exhausting ordinary days you wanted to escape. The Monday mornings. The misunderstandings. The weight of responsibility. All of it — every bit of it — will look different from where I am standing now.

Not because it wasn't hard. It was. But because hard and alive are the same thing. Difficulty is just life with texture. And when you can no longer have it, you would take every difficult day back without hesitation and call it a gift.

I want to be honest about something.

It is not hard to die.

I know that sounds impossible from where you are standing. But it is true. The body knows what to do. The mind, if you have done the work, finds its way to peace. Death itself is not the hard part.

What is hard — what is genuinely, achingly hard — is knowing you will not live anymore. That the coffee in the morning will happen without you. That seasons will change and you won't feel them. That the people you love will laugh at something and you won't be in the room. That life, with all its texture and difficulty and gold, will continue making its way without your particular presence in it.

That is what costs something.

And yet.

Even that cost I have found a way to carry. Because I realized that the life continuing without me is the same life I was part of. The same cycle. The battery transferring. I am not being excluded from life. I am returning to it in a different form.

But I think about the ones staying behind. The ones who will have to let go while remaining. That is a different kind of hard — harder in some ways than dying itself. They have to wake up the next day and the day after and build a life around an absence that will never fully fill.

For them I want to say this.

We should not leave without a farewell. Not a funeral — that is for after. I mean a moment, before the end, where we raise whatever we have and say clearly — I see you, I love you, I am grateful, and I am okay. A ceremony of honesty between people who love each other at the limit of their time together.

We have forgotten that everything is temporary. Even life itself. We live as though the people we love will always be there, and then we are shocked when they are not. But what if we lived knowing? What if we said the important things before the last moment instead of at it?

My grandmother used to say — peace has no price, no value, no estimation. It's just worth it.

She was right. Of everything I could carry out of this life, peace is the only thing light enough and large enough to take. Not regrets. Not anger. Not unfinished business.

Just peace.

And love.

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To my boys —

Dad loves you more than anything. There are no proper words for that, so I will just say it simply and trust you to feel the size of it.

I am proud to be your dad.

Live your lives fully, without regrets. Learn from them. Improve what I left you and give it to your children — that is how life works, that is how it has always worked.

In hard times remember this — you are stronger than the generations before you because you carry our knowledge and your own free will. Step forward. Don't be afraid. Fear only exists for those who want to create it in others. It was never real.

Every one of you is capable of the best of yourself.

Proud of my mans.

Chapter Six — The Door

I am not afraid.

I want to say that clearly, one final time, not as a performance of bravery but as a simple statement of fact. Fear left somewhere along the way. I am not sure exactly when. It departed quietly, the way pain sometimes does when the body finally stops fighting what it cannot change.

What replaced it is something I did not expect.

Deliverance.

That is the only word honest enough. Not resignation. Not surrender. Deliverance. Like something long carried has been gently set down. Like the body itself is exhaling after holding its breath for a very long time.

I can feel it now — the energy beginning to loosen from its physical container. Not violently. Not with drama. With the quiet natural logic of a tide going out. The battery preparing for its transfer. The grass preparing to grow from what the deer leaves behind.

There are tears. I will not pretend otherwise.

But they are not tears of pain. They are tears of satisfaction. Of completion. Of a life that was hard and golden and temporary and enough. Tears that say — I was here. I loved and was loved. I understood something before I left and I wrote it down so you would find it.

I am leaving with love.

And that smell — the one that came three times, the one only I could detect, the smell of life on its expiring date — I embrace it now. I do not recoil from it. It is mine. It was always mine, waiting until I was ready to receive it fully. And somewhere, sometime, that same smell will renew itself. Another expiring date. Another person standing at another door. Another battery preparing to transfer.

The cycle does not pause for any of us.

And that is not a tragedy. That is the most beautiful thing I know.

I did not escape death. I did not trick it or bargain with it or find a secret passage around it. I did something quieter and more difficult and more worthwhile.

I understood it.

And here is the last thing I want to leave with you — the one truth this whole journey taught me, the answer to the question everyone asks but nobody can answer from the inside until they are standing where I am standing now.

Death is just a word.

What face it wears is made entirely of what you made of your life.

I made mine of love and struggle and warriors and children and a smell that came three times and a battery that never stops running and a father who told me not to forget to live and a grandmother who said peace has no price and boys I am proud of beyond any words I have.

I am walking to that door now.

Heads up.

With a smile.

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Life makes its way.

— Yannick Marie, 2026